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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [UK](#) [PO](#)  
SUBJECT: MISSILE DEFENSE: HMG CONCERNED POLAND WILL  
UNDERCUT PROGRESS AT BUCHAREST; PLANS TO RE-ENGAGE ON UK  
PARTICIPATION

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Maura Connelly for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) This is a State action request -- see para 9.

12. (C) Summary. HMG is concerned that public statements by Warsaw since the Polish elections are causing other NATO Allies to begin to question whether NATO should approve MD work at the Bucharest summit in April. HMG suggests the U.S. Government and UK warn the Poles that their wavering is affecting this important NATO decision. Although currently focused on beefing up Allied support for MD at Bucharest, HMG also hopes to re-engage the USG imminently on its own potential participation in the U.S. MD system. End Summary.

Polish Wobbliness Making Berlin Nervous  
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13. (C) HMG is concerned that U.S. and UK efforts to secure a positive NATO decision to pursue MD at the Bucharest summit in April could be undermined by ambiguous messages from Warsaw about Poland's commitment to MD. Libby Stockel, FCO desk officer for MD, told polmiloff January 9 that UK diplomats at NATO were "sensing nervousness" among other Allies since the Polish elections, given the Polish government's "stock-taking" on MD. The UK had planned to work with the USG, Czech Republic, and Poland to lobby other nations before the summit on the merit of NATO pursuing MD cooperation with the United States. Given the preponderance of evidence in NATO studies supporting the utility of NATO MD work and the near certainty of the U.S. system proceeding anyway, HMG expected the French and Germans to agree to move forward and the other Allies to then fall into line. But recent statements by Polish officials suggesting uncertainty about finalizing arrangements with the United States on participation in the third interceptor site have caused the Germans, in particular, HMG says, to express nervousness about the prudence of NATO moving forward on MD work.

14. (C) Stockel, acknowledging that she had little insight into how the U.S.-Polish negotiations were going, wondered if the USG planned to tell the Poles that their public wavering was affecting NATO's decision making. She noted that a NATO decision to pursue MD was certainly in Poland's interest, but the Poles seemed unaware that they were having this effect on squeamish NATO Allies. UK diplomats also reported to London

that Polish diplomats at NATO did not seem to be picking up on this trend and advising Warsaw appropriately. Stockel thought such a message from the USG to the GOP would help. HMG was also considering delivering such a message but did not want to do so without checking with Washington.

#### UK Participation in MD

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¶15. (C) Regarding UK participation in the U.S. MD system, Stockel acknowledged that U.S.-UK discussions had lost momentum. She explained that the mid-2007 flurry of talks on potential participation had been driven by a perception in HMG that the UK needed to make a quick decision on hosting all or part of the third interceptor site or risk losing out to Poland and/or Czech Republic. Once the U.S. negotiations with those countries began and it became clear that UK participation was more likely to be something along the lines of a test site, the urgency dissipated. Since then, HMG has been focused on ensuring NATO makes the "right" decision in April, which gives cover for all Allies.

¶16. (C) While acknowledging that PM Gordon Brown's currently weakened political position makes consideration of the sensitive domestic issue of hosting MD sites even less palatable for HMG, Stockel emphasized that MD has "ALWAYS" been a sensitive issue. While various Cabinet-level meetings on the topic had taken place on MD, to Stockel's knowledge, none of the hard decisions on participation had been made, other than to emphasize that command and control of UK-based assets would be a critical issue for negotiation.

¶17. (C) HMG, however, was planning on re-engaging with the USG soon on potential UK participation. In fact, a UK delegation was supposed to be in Washington January 10 to meet with the

Missile Defense Agency (MDA) and OSD, but had to cancel because of a January 10 House of Lords debate on the HMG announcement that it had approved the use of U.S. assets at Menwith Hill in the MD system. Critics were arguing that HMG had slipped the notification into a packet of announcements just prior to Parliament's winter recess in hopes of avoiding a debate over it. Stockel commented wryly that was actually what the HMG had aimed to do, but she was confident the debate would put to rest some of the unwarranted hysteria about MD.

¶18. (C) FCO subsequently reported that the January 10 House of Lords debate was "interesting but long" (three hours). Most of the peers' complaints and questions were on alleged HMG's lack of transparency with Parliament about its dealings with the United States on missile defense, including about the use of Menwith Hill, i.e. questions on process rather than principle. Peers' questions about missile defense in general indicated the "usual ill-informed questions from the usual suspects," but did give HMG an opportunity to set the record straight. FCO believes to some degree peers were frustrated that HMG did not have anything new to say, because there have been no major UK developments since the last full debate on missile defense in the House of Commons five years ago.

#### Comment

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¶19. (C) The Brits are concerned about the Poles primarily because they do not have insight into the status of U.S. negotiations with Warsaw. (FCO Director for Defense and Strategic Threats Simon Manley noted to Charge in a January 8 meeting that he would be in Washington January 24-25 and was keen to meet with A/U/S John Rood on the Arms Trade Treaty; Embassy recommends this meeting as an opportunity to update HMG on the status of MD negotiations with the Czech Republic and Poland.) Wanting to be helpful in securing a positive outcome on MD at Bucharest, which will provide Allies, not least among them the UK, domestic political coverage for participating in MD, the UK hopes the USG and UK can jointly get the Poles back on message. The good news is that HMG has

not given up hope of being part of the MD club, even if just as a test site; the bad news is that with no looming deadline for deciding on participation, the UK will have the time and space to mark out tough negotiating positions.

¶10. (C) Action request for State: Please advise on whether HMG should press Warsaw to tone down its public statements intimating uncertainty about hosting the third interceptor site or risk weakening support for missile defense (MD) among NATO members.

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